

WGST Honors Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Average (C)	Poor (D)
Standard Argumentative Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an over-all theme and clearly articulated thesis in the paper • Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence • All assertions support the thesis with evidence from the texts • Has relevant background/context • Relates existing arguments to evidence supporting thesis • Integrates several points of view/perspectives on the issue • Makes insightful connections to readings, lectures and other course/scholarly materials • Points to a “so-what” or larger significance • All evidence is properly cited and there is a bibliography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-all theme or argument is clear, strong, and well-articulated • Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence • Contains adequate evidence to support its claims • Would benefit from more materials, more thorough interpretation of materials • Occasional connections to readings and other scholarly materials • Uses specific examples to support thesis • Evidence is cited, but errors in format of citations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper lacks an argument, or the argument is weak • Though class and/or scholarly readings are used, there is little interpretation of texts • Relationship between evidence and thesis is not always clearly defined; it is superficial • Provides summary and no analysis • Evidence is unreferenced, inaccurate or citations incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks a thesis statement OR has a thesis, but does not use evidence OR makes a feasible argument, but does not meet the assignments requirements • Does not use class readings or other scholarly materials • No evidence of thorough analysis • Reliance on disconnected ideas without interpretation • Conclusions not connected to the thesis • No citations
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay has an intro, body, and conclusion. The organization outlines expectations and allows the essay to flow from one idea to the next. Paper acknowledges its shortcomings in the conclusion and points to how further work could advance the topic. • Transitions between ideas are clear and smooth • Each paragraph contains distinct units of thought and are clearly introduced • Arrangement is logical and conducive to a persuasive argument • Sentences vary, but remain clear • Minimal grammatical errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay has intro, body, and conclusion. Little guidance for the reader and restates what has already been presented. Does not move beyond the paper. • The overall structure of the paper is clear, but some topic sentences are weak. • Transitions that would clarify the relationships amongst main ideas are occasionally missing. • Minimal grammatical errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay contains intro, body, and conclusion. There is an idea of what the paper is about but not an effective thesis. • Uses anecdote and or rhetorical questions without connecting to the rest of the paper. • Awkward or abrupt transitions • Some paragraphs weak or undeveloped • Minimal grammatical errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear organizational pattern. • No transitions • Incoherent paragraphs • Jumbled structure • Lack of planning and revision clearly evident

As Professor Tim Ryan notes, “a senior thesis differs from an undergraduate course paper in that it is a far more substantial undertaking than course paper. First, you conceive, conduct, analyze and present original research. Second, evaluation for a thesis differs from undergraduate coursework in that the latter focuses on demonstrating what you learned about a topic or analytical approach. As such, a flawed course paper (related to classes with the designation

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400 or below) can succeed, as long as it is strong in a particular area. In contrast, a thesis is about generating new knowledge. It is a more mature undertaking, and therefore evaluated more holistically. Much of your undergraduate career has been *training* in how to synthesize and produce knowledge. The best thesis projects go beyond training and make meaningful contributions to scholarly debates by articulating a problem and examining it with analytic rigor and clarity.” In other words, what is your big idea/problem/research question? How does it differ from what is already published? What gap/s are you filling? How can you articulate your ideas clearly and persuasively to make sure your readers are nodding and not nodding off or actively arguing with you? What is/are your method/s for bringing your audience along?

Another way to extend the value of this rubric is by being attentive to the following questions:

- Have I stated my goal clearly, compellingly (and early)? Remember, you are not writing a mystery. Get to the point.
- Have I defined my terrain? Do I bring my audience along by clearly stating what is at stake?
- Are my examples clear, concrete, and related to the discussion/problem/research question? Does my evidence fully illustrate the point that I am making?
- Am I avoiding wordiness?
- Have I interpreted the evidence I provide? Is the evidence relevant to the point I am communicating (note this is here twice, because it is critical)?
- Is my writing and structure clear and consistent throughout?
- Do I have effective transitions within and between paragraphs?
- Are my sentences overloaded? Do I have too many ideas in one sentence?